

J.W. Williamson
2737 Hwy 421 South
Boone, N.C. 28607

September 10, 2002

Mr. Carl Goode, PE, Manager
Office of Human Environment
NCDOT
1583 Mail Service Center
Raleigh, N.C. 27699-1583

Dear Mr. Goode:

RE TIP No. R-2237C

Please count our voices among those urging the NCDOT to widen the existing Hwy 321 bypass through Blowing Rock, rather than spend millions more disrupting additional natural habitat, which all the alternative routes will do.

Thank you for taking public comment on this project.

Sincerely,

Pam & Jerry Williamson

Pam & Jerry Williamson
2737 Hwy 421 South
Boone, N.C. 28607

North Carolina Board of Transportation
1583 Mail Service Center
Raleigh, NC 27699

August 5, 2002

Board Members:

After several years of debate concerning the widening of Hwy 321, there is little left to say about the merits of widening the existing road as opposed to any alternative. By any objective measure, the recently released EIS confirms that widening the existing road is best for all concerned parties, including Blowing Rock. Therefore, the purpose of this letter is not to rehash the same arguments. We realize that public decisions are not always based on the merits of a particular position, but often based on the tactics and maneuverings of special interest groups. Consequently, the purpose of this letter is to point out that the opposition to DOT's plans to widen 321 has been purposely exaggerated.

Concerned Citizens of Blowing Rock has skillfully utilized clever tactics and marketing principles in order to make public opposition to the project appear more formidable than it really is. They have inflated their ranks by insinuating various horrors that are blatantly untrue. For example, a rumor frequently brought up is that when the widening construction begins, traffic will be diverted onto Main Street. Even though DOT denies such a plan, the rumor remains.

In interviews with large regional newspapers, Concerned Citizens representatives often do not make a distinction between Main Street (321) and 321 Bypass. This "oversight" and statements using the phrase "through the middle of town" purposely insinuate that Main Street itself will be widened. This is obviously an alarm tactic designed to draw sympathy from residents across the state who are not familiar enough with the area to distinguish between 321 and 321 Bypass.

Inhabitants of resort areas are notorious for having a gated-community attitude, characterized by a narrow perspective, pettiness, and selfishness. Those with this mentality try to create their own little world and shield it from the influence of those not privileged enough to share it. Rather than compromise and try to mitigate any potential negative influence, they demand that everyone bow to their desires, no matter how preposterous. The notion that millions of North Carolina (& United States) taxpayers should foot the enormous bill for an alternate route in order to appease a handful of privileged resort residents is ludicrous. This is not to say that everyone in Blowing Rock has such an attitude, indeed many town citizens- especially the merchants- support DOT's original plans. But they have been drowned out and, we suspect, bullied into silence by the overwhelming propaganda of the town's self-appointed spokesmen.

No one argues against the desire to maintain Blowing Rock's character. In too many situations, road-building decisions have taken precedent over every other issue, to the detriment of communities across the nation. But it should be obvious to anyone with even passing knowledge of Hwy 321 that the issue is not about preserving Blowing Rock's character. The recently-named historic district is only marginally significant, which should

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be obvious from the fact that it was not considered important until widening was proposed. Much of the existing route is through an area characterized mostly by vacant lots and chain retail businesses. Indeed, the widening of the road with the proposed enhancements will actually improve the area and add to the character of the town.

Concerned Citizens, in response to opposition from the Aho, Blackberry, and Green Hill communities, has tried to characterize us as "neighborhood groups" with a NIMBY attitude. The irony is that Concerned Citizens itself has exhibited the most blatant NIMBY attitude possible. They have been emphatic that the only acceptable alternate routes are those that completely bypass Blowing Rock. They accuse DOT of having no concern for local communities when making road decisions, while being guilty of the same attitude in trying to route a bypass through any community except Blowing Rock. They have shown no concern for the amount of tax dollars needed for such routes, and are even willing to risk the Blue Ridge Parkway-a resource of national significance- as long as their backyard remains untouched. In short, our opposition to any alternate route can hardly be characterized as looking out for our own interests, in light of the extremely narrow, selfish mindset of Concerned Citizens.

We're confident that DOT is familiar with the dynamics of controversial public issues, and that you are able to see the reality behind the false images presented by Concerned Citizens. Opposition groups often have the upper hand because they are able to appeal to people's emotions (a citizen's group fighting big government, etc.). While the general public would agree that widening 321 is to be preferred over an alternate route, being for a road-widening project is not something that most people get passionate about. The public is generally complacent on most issues, trusting that the right decisions will be made for the right reasons. With this particular issue, few individuals and groups have expressed concern about an alternate route primarily because most people are sure that DOT will choose to widen the road rather than reroute it. The proposed alternatives are so expensive, so environmentally damaging, and so absurd- especially when compared to widening the existing road- that the inhabitants of the world outside Blowing Rock are unable to fathom the thought that DOT would even seriously consider the alternatives.

Like many resort communities, Blowing Rock has a significant population with the time, wealth, education, and experience to organize and orchestrate a campaign on any issue they perceive to be important to them. The surrounding rural communities are not as fortunate, being populated with working-class people who do not have the means nor the leisure to become intensely involved in public issues, real or perceived. You must ensure that your decision is based on reality; not on a scenario created, exaggerated, and promoted by a group with very narrow interests. As government leaders and decision-makers, you have responsibility to all citizens, not just those with resources to demand your attention.

(Please note that no attempt was made to widely circulate this letter in order to get as many signatures as possible. As stated above, this issue is not about which group can generate the most noise. It is about doing what is best for the state and the nation.)

Sincerely,
Dm + Mrs William J. Williams, Jr.
PO Box 108 Blowing Rock, NC 28605

Candy Fallows Winebarger

Post Office Box 3517
Boone, North Carolina 28604

OFFICE

RECEIVED

SEP 24 2002

Mr. Carl Goode, PE, Manager
Office of Human Environment
NCDOT
1583 Mail Service Center
Raleigh, North Carolina 27699-1583

Re: US Highway 321 through Blowing Rock

Dear Mr. Goode:

As a longtime resident of Watauga County and, because of my work as a real estate appraiser, a frequent user of Highway 321 off the mountain, I can certainly appreciate the immediate need for 4-laning of this road. Furthermore, I strongly support using the present route for many reasons.

The cost to taxpayers is the most important factor to me. The additional cost of any of the alternatives is more than twice the present route. It seems all taxpayers constantly complain about additional taxes so support of paying more than twice as necessary for a road makes no sense. I would support the alternatives if those against the present route would be willing to pony up the additional funds.

US Highway 321 has been in existence for 150 years or so, has been a federal highway ever since I moved here and has always been a primary highway into the High Country and anyone who has built or bought property on that road would have been ignorant if they didn't believe that 4-laning was in its future. If you buy a property next to a quarry, asphalt plant, junk yard, or in this case, a major highway, you need to do your homework.

The alternative through the Blackberry Valley would create cuts and fills of monumental proportions and would forever spoil a beautiful valley, especially since it is viewed from the Blue Ridge Parkway.

The alternative through the Green Hill area would subject a century old residential area to a primary highway, something no one in that area could ever have imagined at the time they purchased their properties, some of which have been in families for generations. If these owners wanted to be on a primary highway, there have always been properties available on Hwy 321 and all those properties were built after the road came into existence.

As a resident of Blowing Rock once said publicly, Hwy 321 Bypass through Blowing Rock is hardly "scenic." I believe a divided highway with plantings would look far better than the appearance of the present highway and might get rid of some of the dilapidated structures along this route.

I regret this highway improvement has been delayed for years and hope that the DOT can do what is right for the taxpayers of this state and use the present route. P.S. My parents are residents of Blowing Rock and favor the present route.

Thank you for your consideration.

Candy Fallows Winebarger

Tom Winters

P. O. Box 162
Sherrill, NC
North Carolina 28673

Mr. John Page, Project Manager
Parsons Brinckerhoff Quade & Douglas, Inc.
909 Aviation Parkway, Suite 1500
Morrisville, N. C. 27560

August 18, 2002

RECEIVED

SEP 05 2002

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SEP 05 2002

AUG 21 2002

Dear Mr. Page:

I am writing this letter as a concerned citizen of Blowing Rock to express my concerns with Bypass Alternatives 1A and 1B.

Bypass Alternative 1B includes the excavation of a major part of Gideon Ridge. This alternative should not be considered for the following reasons:

Alternative 1B will cost a minimum of \$20,000,000.00 more than the next Alternative 1A, in order to remove just one curve. NC DOT surely can use tax payers money more prudently than spending this huge sum of money to remove one curve. Hey, we are talking mountains, people expect curves!

The excavation at Gideon Ridge will leave a scar on Blowing Rock at its main entrance. This excavation will be able to be seen for miles, including the Blue Ridge Parkway. Statements in the "US 321 Improvements Project at Blowing Rock" report the fact that Gideon Ridge is very rocky, and once excavated, will NOT support vegetation. This means erosion with rock slides onto Hwy. 321. This will certainly affect all of Blowing Rock and its economy. The proof of this statement is in the type of rock which composes the Gideon Ridge. The rock at Gideon Ridge is Metamorphic rock. Metamorphic rock is an igneous rock from which granite is derived. Granite contains quartz, feldspar, and mica. These form layers and often wavy bands. This means there will always be a certain danger of rocks shifting and of rock slides. Since reports state no vegetation will grow on the excavated Gideon Ridge, there will certainly be rock slides that will cover Hwy. 321 as they have in the past, and as recently as the slide in the Patterson area when travelers had to be rerouted through Wilkesboro in order to get to Blowing Rock. Of course this was a major inconvenience and resulted in costs to the public!

The excavation of Gideon Ridge would be a major undertaking as is stated in the DEIS report. It would most definitely cause major traffic problems for motorists to and from Blowing Rock. This, alone, would have a significant impact on Blowing Rock's economy--no matter what time of year. I find it most ironical that the project is entitled as "US 321 Improvements Project at Blowing Rock." If Bypass Alternative 1B is chosen, there certainly will not be any improvement whatsoever to Blowing Rock--not visually or economically. It would also disrupt one of Blowing Rock's oldest and most prominent neighborhoods.

Bypass 1A includes the dissection of the residential area of Green Hill. When talking about major residential neighborhoods of Blowing Rock, people always refer to the following three neighborhoods: Mayview, Gideon Ridge, Green Hill. If Bypass 1A or 1B are chosen, two of the three major residential neighborhoods of Blowing Rock will be destroyed. With the proposed 1A Bypass, the road would dissect the neighborhood of Green Hill in half. How many comparably priced residential neighborhoods in North Carolina have a major four-lane highway running through the middle of them? I bet the neighborhood of Myers Park in Charlotte does not!

Also, the Bypass Alternative 1A and 1B will displace at least 25 homes. In the DEIS report it states "will displace homes--not houses. Homes are peoples lives, places to rear families and to build futures. Both Alternatives 1A and 1B will displace 25 homes. This figure is a 64% higher displacement than the next closest displacement. If for no other reason, this factor should eliminate Bypass Alternatives 1A and 1B.

Bypass Alternative 4A or 4B are the only acceptable alternatives for US 321. There is no question that in order for Blowing Rock to continue to be a premier NC resort area, Hwy 321 must bypass the Town of Blowing Rock.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Tom Winters

cc: Senator Jesse Helms
Senator John Edwards
Ms. Missy Dickens, PE

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COMMENT SHEET

US 321 Improvements

Corridor Public Hearing

R-2237C Project 6.739001T Caldwell and Watauga Counties

August 26, 2002

NAME:

ANDREW WOOD

ADDRESS: 330 HODGES MILLER RD. BLOWING ROCK N.C. 28605

COMMENTS AND/OR QUESTIONS:

WIDENING THE EXISTING 321 IS THE ONLY
PRACTICAL PLAN. NO NEW SCARS ON THE MOUNTAINS
I DID NOT MOVE HERE WITH INTENTIONS OF
STAYING A FEW YEARS, THEN MOVING SOMEWHERE
ELSE. MY LIFE AND MY FAMILIES LIVES WILL
BE SPENT HERE.

Comments may be mailed to:

C. B. Goode, Jr., P. E.

Manager of the Office of Human Environment

1583 Mail Service Center

Raleigh, NC 27699-1599 Phone: (919) 250-4092 Fax: (919) 250-4208

E-mail: cgoode@dot.state.nc.us

COMMENT SHEET

US 321 Improvements

Corridor Public Hearing

R-2237C Project 6.739001T Caldwell and Watauga Counties

August 26, 2002

NAME:

CECIL WOOD

ADDRESS: 820 AHO ROAD, BLOWING ROCK, N.C. 28605

COMMENTS AND/OR QUESTIONS:

WIDENING WHERE IS OR LEAVE AS IS,

Comments may be mailed to:

C. B. Goode, Jr., P. E.

Manager of the Office of Human Environment

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Raleigh, NC 27699-1599 Phone: (919) 250-4092 Fax: (919) 250-4208

E-mail: cgoode@dot.state.nc.us

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Mrs Georgia Wood
411 Thunder Mountain Rd.
Blowing Rock, NC 28605

COMMENT SHEET

SEP 03 2002

US 321 Improvements

Corridor Public Hearing

Project 6.739001T

Caldwell and Watauga Counties

August 26, 2002

NAME:

Georgia E. Wood

ADDRESS:

411 Thunder Mtn Rd. B. Rock NC 28605

COMMENTS AND/OR QUESTIONS:

I feel like the road 321 should stay on the route it is on - it will not disturb the Wild Life of our County - and will keep the cost down we have such a shortage of land where people can hike and see the beautiful trees and shrubs - where the owl call each other from one side of the mtn to the other - Please keep 321 where it is located now -

Thank you

Comments may be mailed to:

C. B. Goode, Jr., P. E.

Manager of the Office of Human Environment

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COMMENT SHEET

US 321 Improvements

Corridor Public Hearing

R-2237C

Project 6.739001T

Caldwell and Watauga Counties

August 26, 2002

NAME:

Georgia Wood

ADDRESS:

411 Thunder Mtn Rd. B. Rock NC 28605

COMMENTS AND/OR QUESTIONS:

I would be so happy for the road to be left where it is - that way the cost would be less - and Wild Life won't be disturbed. I pray the right decision will be made -
Thank you

Comments may be mailed to:

C. B. Goode, Jr., P. E.

Manager of the Office of Human Environment

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COMMENT SHEET

US 321 Improvements

Corridor Public Hearing

R-2237C Project 6.739001T Caldwell and Watauga Counties
August 26, 2002

NAME:

Nancy T. Wood

ADDRESS:

820 Aho Rd. Blowing Rock, N.C. 28605

COMMENTS AND/OR QUESTIONS:

Consider existing Rd. or leave as is.

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Comments may be mailed to:
C. B. Goode, Jr., P. E.
Manager of the Office of Human Environment
1583 Mail Service Center
Raleigh, NC 27699-1599 Phone: (919) 250-4092 Fax: (919) 250-4208
E-mail: cgoode@dot.state.nc.us

COMMENT SHEET

US 321 Improvements

Corridor Public Hearing

R-2237C Project 6.739001T Caldwell and Watauga Counties
August 26, 2002

NAME:

Tonya Wood

ADDRESS:

330 Hodges Miller Rd. Blowing Rock, NC 28606

COMMENTS AND/OR QUESTIONS:

Why mess up beautiful country when
widening it where it's at only improves
the look through B.R. anyway.
Listen to the full time citizens who
have lived here our entire life
instead of a bunch of move-ins

Comments may be mailed to:
C. B. Goode, Jr., P. E.
Manager of the Office of Human Environment
1583 Mail Service Center
Raleigh, NC 27699-1599 Phone: (919) 250-4092 Fax: (919) 250-4208
E-mail: cgoode@dot.state.nc.us

COMMENT SHEET

CITY OF RALEIGH
RESERVED

US 321 Improvements

Corridor Public Hearing

R-2237C Project 6.739001T Caldwell and Watauga Counties

August 26, 2002

NAME: Joanne & Joseph WoolLEN
ADDRESS: 1353 Green Hill Rd. Blowing Rock, NC.
P.O. Box 609 28605
COMMENTS AND/OR QUESTIONS:

Widen existing 321

Another plan is costly and
ridiculous!

COMMENT SHEET

US 321 Improvements

Corridor Public Hearing

R-2237C Project 6.739001T Caldwell and Watauga Counties

August 26, 2002

NAME: V. Wyatt
ADDRESS: 604 BLUEBERRY LN, POORE, NC 28607
COMMENTS AND/OR QUESTIONS:

CURRENT 321 Hwy should REMAIN AS IS -
BUILD ALT. 4A IS BEST CHOICE IF
ANY CONSTRUCTION IS DONE.

Comments may be mailed to:

C. B. Goode, Jr., P. E.

Manager of the Office of Human Environment

1583 Mail Service Center

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Comments may be mailed to:

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E-mail: cgoode@dot.state.nc.us

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S. Tucker Yates
P.O. Box 2128
Blowing Rock, NC 28605
August 23, 2002

Mr. William Gilmore, Manager
PDEA Branch, NCDOT
1548 Mail Service Center
Raleigh, NC 27699-1548

Dear Mr. Gilmore:

My wife and I moved to Blowing Rock in 1993 and live here on a year round basis. She has been coming to this lovely village all her life and is the fourth generation of her family to own a home here. It takes only a short visit to Blowing Rock to confirm that we have not only a beautiful and quaint little town but also one that is extremely unique, certainly in the South and perhaps in the United States.

My purpose in writing is to urge you to do all in your power to stop the NCDOT plan to widen the current highway which goes through Blowing Rock. As you may know our City Council took a very strong position last week in opposing it, and I think most residents agree. That it would adversely alter and divide this town, changing its intrinsic character forever, must be evident to most. It is noteworthy that there are only two streets in Blowing Rock going in that direction. Practically every resident in town uses Valley Blvd on a daily basis, a requirement even to go to the only local grocery store. Surely it is wrong to utilize this road to build a four lane bypass when 88% of those currently using it are passing through to another destination. To encourage increased traffic through the center of our population, especially more large trucks, will not only prove to be extremely disruptive but dangerous. - not to mention the expediency a true bypass would afford the truckers and others passing through.

Therefore, please help us create a highway that is an embodiment of its actual name: a by-pass. A by-pass is a road that goes around a town, not through it. Its purpose is to facilitate the movement of traffic away from the center of town. It is my hope that we will "bite the bullet" now and do what will obviously be inevitable in 15 or 20 years by building a real by-pass around our town, one that will cost much less now than then. This would not only preserve our village but would be economically feasible in the long run. And surely a route through Goforth Road and Opposum Hollar is not only unthinkable, but ridiculous. And why not tunnel under the Parkway as is currently being done at the intersection of 421?

Some 30 years ago I was an original investor in Bald Head Island, the lovely community off the coast of the southern most point of NC. I vividly remember the struggle we had with the State in gaining the needed permits to develop. The reason? They wished to preserve the unique environment for the wildlife that lived there by being given ownership to a substantial percentage of the island. Now, although this was very expensive to those who owned it, it was the right and noble thing to do, a fact confirmed 30 years later. I wonder if 30 years from now our children will say that the officials of our outstanding state again did the right and noble thing by preserving the very unique and wonderful little village of Blowing Rock, not for the wildlife, as fine and wonderful as that may be, but for the people - not just those of us privileged to live here but for the thousands and thousands of people who will visit Blowing Rock and be enormously blessed by the experience.

I know that this is a difficult problem for everyone. Thank you so much for your consideration

Sincerely,

S. Tucker Yates



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